Embracing of Buddhism by Dalits

2240. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA : Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that thousands of dalits have embracted Buddhism in a big rally in the National Capital ;

(b) whether the conversion is considered as a consequence of atrocities on dalits and officials apathy towards their problems or otherwise ; and

(c) the reaction of Government on this issue ?

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIYA) : (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Barrier-free access for disabled

2241. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA : Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether inaccessibility in buildings deprives disabled of a better education and job opportunities ; and

(b) if so, the action taken to frame time bound programme to have barrier-free access at all public and private buildings for the disabled ?

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIYA) : (a)Yes, Sir.

(b)The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 enforced w.*e.f.* Feb. 1996, *inter alia*, provides for removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institutions, imparting vocational or professional training. Also, the Act requires that appropriate Governments and local authorities shall, within the limit of their economic capacity and development, provide for ramps in buildings, adaptation of toilets for wheel chair users, Braille symbols and audticry signals in elevators or lifts, etc. To practically demonstrate access features, a project named "New Delhi Pilot Project" has been successfully undertaken in buildings within 1 sq. km. Area of Indraprastha Estate. Guidelines for space standards and model bye-laws indicating various provisions to ensure barrier free access in public buildings have been prepared and circulated to State/UTs for early implementation.